CALIFORNIA RECREATION RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE January 14-15, 2008 Meeting Notes

January 14, 2008 Field Trip

Members present: Monte Hendricks, Linda McMillan, Dick Dasmann, Nate Rangel, Paul McFarland, Patricia Gatz, Bob Warren, Charlie Wilson, Danna Stroud, Chris Oberti

Members Absent: Don Klusman

Designated Federal Official: Marlene Finley

BLM Ex Officio: Mike Ayers, Acting

Forest Service Staff: Tamara Wilton, Beverly Smith, Frances Enkoji

Forest Service Representatives: Peggy Hernandez, Jody Noiron, Tina Terrell, Tom Spencer, Jean Wade Evans, Will Metz, Sherry Rollman, Ken Hefner, Marti Dumpis, Fran Colwell, Anne Carey, LTanga Watson, Brenda Ehmann

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Warren at the Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office. After introductions and a welcome by Jody Noiron, FS Angeles National Forest (NF) she gave an overview of the Angeles National Forest.

Tom Spencer, Fee Coordinator for the 4 southern CA NFs, gave a presentation titled "Managing Recreation Fee Programs in a High Impact Setting." This presentation gave an overview of the visitation and use in urban forests, changes made in the southern CA fee program to implement the Federal Lands Enhancement Act, characteristics of a standard amenity fee with the focus on high impact areas (HIRA), how these were delineated and maps and descriptions of all 32 fee areas (HIRA) on the four southern CA forests and the Sequoia NF. The impacts of trash, graffiti, vandalism and resource damage from the heavy use in these areas were displayed. The presentation also described revenues and how the fees are invested and leveraged with partners. Each Forest Supervisor (FS) provided a description of one HIRA from their forest.

Members asked what the definition of "reasonable distance" meant in the criteria. Tamara Wilton, R5 Fee Program Manager, explained that there are no set distances, that it is based on what a person would view as reasonable when recreating in the specific fee area and how visitors use the area. She acknowledged that can vary by person and that it is a continuing dialogue both nationally and regionally and we will make changes if needed.

Members discussed communications and how information gets to the public and the comment was made that many members of the public are not aware of how fee areas have changed from fee demo to REA, where to purchase passes, vendor locations, etc. Tom Spencer displayed the Adventure Pass website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/ap/ that contains maps of fee areas, lists of vendors, online pass sales, history of the program, changes to the program, etc. can be found to show the information that is available. He also outlined on going efforts to make information available through publications, handouts, at recreation sites and said that they are always looking for better solutions. He noted the challenges of reaching a large and diverse population base where many are first time visitors. One member noted that he had receive incomplete information at a FS office, a discussion on the need to keep the FS employees up to date on changes to the fee program and continue to train new employees.

Discussions and questions by the RRAC members were addressed. Discussions included signing and information available at pass sale locations and how you buy a pass during the winter for the snow play area since it is a short season and often people make spur of the moment decisions to go into the NF. The sale of passes and the management of these areas were described and includes vendors, temporary on-site fee collection stations and field rangers to disseminate information and encourage dispersing the heavy use. There was a question on who provides law enforcement in the snow play areas and the Forest explained that both FS Law Enforcement and the County Sheriffs Department provide this service.

The presentations displayed the heavy use on weekends and holidays and the RRAC wanted to know if forests were okay with the use being concentrated on those days. The FS explained that these forests are heavy day use Forests with frequent turnover of visitors each day due to close proximity to urban areas. Cleanup up of the areas frequently takes most of the weekdays to complete and prepare for the influx of visitors again on the weekend. A suggestion was made to possibly try a split fee structure to encourage use during the week.

Tom explained that Adventure Pass funds are distributed according to a formula, based on previous data gathered on zip codes of visitors and previous responses to questionnaires where people were asked to identify where they recreated most often and where they would like their fees to be spent. Other discussions on use of fines for graffiti offenders, providing information for the media and ideas for using the media more creatively, working with volunteers and how RRAC members can get their user groups they represent involved were discussed.

Jody Noiron, FS Angeles NF, closed the presentation with a few statistics that reflect the Angeles NF visitors. 25% of all human beings that begin life in the U.S, start their life in the Los Angeles Basin, English is not the primary language spoken in the Los Angeles Basin. Jody stated that we have a unique opportunity

to teach people to be good citizens and conservation education is key to that effort.

The rest of the day was spent on a field trip to the San Gabriel Canyon HIRA on the Angeles NF. The first stop was at the mouth of the canyon at the newly completed Gateway Center. District Resource Officer Karen Fortus described the previous facilities at the site which was a portable trailer that was deteriorating and in need of replacement that was used as an entrance station. The Gateway Center was built to provide forest information, interpretation and educational opportunities to the many visitors to the canyon and also serve as a fee collection site. On a typical Sunday, 3,000 cars enter the canyon. The Center was built in partnership with the City of Azusa. It is located on city land and the FS has a 20 year lease. The City of Azusa funded the construction of the building and will provide maintenance for the building. The forest recently received a grant for the landscaping of the site. The first phase was the construction of the center and Phase II will complete native plant garden and interpretive signing. The forest is working with partners such as water companies to assist us with promoting good forest stewardship. They also assist with watershed restoration efforts, i.e. tree planting, slope stabilization projects such as seeding of slopes with native sees. Volunteer docents will provide programs and guided walks in the native plant garden once completed. Adventure Pass fees are used to provide for lease fees for the site, operate the Center educational programs, support volunteers and to leverage with partner opportunities. Tom Rhineberger, a volunteer with Angele Volunteer Association, provided the group with a description of his duties and how he has personally seen the changes in the canyon as a result of the fee program, most notably a cleaner canyon and improved facilities. The forest will use this site as an alternate location for school environmental education programs, bringing the forest closer to schools who can't afford to travel to other locations within the forest.

At the first East Fork stop, Roger Richcreek, San Gabriel River RD Assistant District Recreation Officer, told the group that this was previously a dirt turnout and now through the fee program there is a restroom, interpretive signing and bear-proof trash cans. The parking area also provides access to trails into the Sheep Mt. Wilderness area, the Bridge to No Where, and to popular fishing areas upstream.

The second stop along the East Fork roadside at Cattle Canyon illustrated the typical use in the canyon. The river is the attraction in the canyon and visitors' park along the roadside and walk down to the river's edge to play in the water and picnic or relax. Many visitors leave large amounts of trash and garbage behind. The river flow is reduced by the numerous rock dams that visitors build to create swimming areas. Recreation fees are used to install toilet facilities, dumpsters, information and interpretive signing and provide for trash pickup along the river. A suggestion was made to install recycling cans. Thousands of children that come to the canyon each year receive recycling information.

Visitors purchasing a pass at the San Gabriel Canyon Gateway Center are provided with information about helping to reduce trash as well as receiving trash bags. The trash bags are either donated by corporate sponsors or purchased with fee revenues and are distributed several times a year, especially during the summer.

The Forest operates 2 trash trucks to service the Forest with 1 of the trucks operating primarily in the Canyon. 125 tons of trash is removed annually from just San Gabriel Canyon. The District also contracts to have 65,000 gallons of waste removed from all of the toilets in the Canyon.

West Fork Day Use Area used a combination of Capital Improvement Program funds and fee funds to rehabilitate the facilities in the day use area. Two larger toilets were installed, parking area was paved and re-aligned to provide easier ingress and egress, and concrete picnic tables were installed to meet the demands of the high use of this area. In addition, lighting for the parking area is provided by overhead street lamps powered by solar panels to save on utility costs. In the future the forest would like to construct a bridge from the site to cross the river to the pathway on the other side.

Steve Segreto, Environmental Education Program Manager showed the group the San Gabriel Education Center. He had begun as a volunteer and after 3 years was hired by the forest to coordinate programs at this site and at the Mt. Baldy Schoolhouse Center. The San Gabriel Education Center opened in 2004. They provide environmental education programs that follow the state curriculum requirements and charge school districts \$5 per student for a 5 hour program. They estimate they will provide programs for 6,000 students this year here and 10,000 at Mt. Baldy Schoolhouse Education Center. Schools from as far away as Lancaster attend programs and most students fro from inter-city schools. On weekends they provide program for families such as gold mining and the Mt. Baldy Schoolhouse has "Living History" programs. They have 6 student interns and 6 retired teachers to staff the centers. Fee funds provide for operations and maintenance, supplies and salary.

Next stop was the San Gabriel Canyon Off –Highway Vehicle Staging Area. Patrick Hersey, OHV Program Manager, described the management of this area, which is a Special Recreation Permit area with a fee of \$8.00 per primary vehicle, and, \$5.00 per secondary vehicle. A maximum of 450 vehicles per day are allowed in the area. OHV volunteers assist with the management of the area. Mike Bishop, OHV volunteer from Azusa Canyon Off-Road Association (ACORA), described his duties and experiences in the area. The fees collected at the site are used only for the operation and maintenance of the OHV area.

The RRAC left the San Gabriel Canyon HIRA at 4:30 p.m. and returned to the hotel.

January 15, 2008.

Members present: Monte Hendricks, Linda McMillan, Dick Dasmann, Nate Rangel, Paul McFarland, Patricia Gatz, Bob Warren, Charlie Wilson, Danna Stroud, Chris Oberti

Members Absent: Don Klusman

Designated Federal Official: Marlene Finley

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Forest Service Staff: Tamara Wilton, Beverly Smith, Frances Enkoji

Meeting called to order at 8:05 by Chairperson, Bob Warren.

Old Business:

Marlene Finley passed out name badges, (requested at last meeting to have some identification when they go out to the forest.). Need to get Patricia, Charles and Chris' photos today to make their identification badges.

Bob Warren introduced Chris Oberti, a new RRAC member replacing, Roy Denner who resigned. Chris will be representing Winter Motorized Recreation. He asked if we have confirmation for Chris and if she was able to vote at the meeting. Marlene stated she has a letter from the Chief of the FS that designated her as an alternate and although she doesn't have a letter that identifies her move from an alternate to full membership yet, she said that she could fulfill her role as a member of the RRAC at the meeting.

Marlene asked to do a close out on the field trip yesterday and the presentation of R5 HIRA.

Comments from RRAC members:

- Excellent field trip.
- Impressed with FS staff, had no idea the work that is done to clean the area, amount of trash removal, and effort that it takes.
- Came away with some ideas to try to help the FS solve some of the problems.
- Feel it is important for the RRAC to go on field trips to see the areas are so different and problems vary in different areas.

- Better idea of HIRA, especially when comes to dispersed services, it becomes a greater challenge.
- Impressed with numbers of visitor, pleased to hear about quota and hear from volunteer at OHV area,
- The education center was amazing and what they do with the kids.
- Interesting to see how fire affects area, numbers of people in open playground and the work to mange.
- Complimented forest staff on their ability to contact user groups, obvious it works.
- Impressed with the dedication of user groups, passion and willingness to go the extra mile.

Bob said they would postpone approval of minutes and bylaws until after lunch.

Bob talked about process to review fee proposals and suggested it would make sense to look at day use trailheads as a group, campgrounds grouped by forest and by new fees vs. increases and group cabins and lookouts together.

Linda said at November meeting two BLM OHV areas were reviewed and the proposals included a raise in fees from one year to the next and the RRAC made a recommendation for the multiyear fee increases. The RRAC made a recommendation to implement the Mt Shasta Climbing Special Recreation Permit proposal reviewed at the November meeting which also included a phased in fee increase over 2 years. She said that after thinking about that she wondered if making recommendations that affected more than one year might leave future RRAC members disempowered. She felt it was cleaner for proposals to reflect fee increases one year at a time. She realizes this may be less efficient but feels it is something RRAC should consider. Marlene said we are attempting to raise fees incrementally to make up for 8-10 years without fee increases and that the phased in approach is a way to reach current market price in a gradual way... The RRAC discussed recommendations they make that will be implemented beyond their term and what the affects of these recommendations have on future members. It was noted that there was nothing in bylaws to prohibit recommendations that have affects beyond current member's terms. Nate and Dick stated that the RRAC can revisit some of their previous recommendations, and can review those fees. Monte said he can see both sides and likes Dick's idea to flag step increases. Patricia inquired if they were to approve that, how much of the RO budget is affected and does that cause a problem. Staff explained the appropriated budget and fee receipts are two separate processes. If fee increase is recommended but not implemented, we won't have the funds to do what we proposed with the fees and will have to find other means to complete the work or not do it. Marlene explained the budget process and we don't change our allocation to a forest based on their fees. For planning purposes, the Capital Improvement process, and personnel planning, it is important to know what funding you have. Marlene suggested they could make the recommendation to

approve one year of fees but not the other. Nate said it makes sense for camping fees to have step increases. Bob said once they review the backlog of fee proposals this may not keep occurring.

Nate and Dick asked if the RRAC can come up with proposal for new fees, or reduce fees. Frances responded that if the RRAC wanted to submit a fee proposal they would have to follow the same process as any other fee proposal.

Public Comment Period began at 10:00 a.m. and ended at 10:23 a.m.

During public comment period Marlene presented letter to RRAC from Mr. Peter Wiechers regarding the Forks of the Kern reservation fee, Sequoia NF. Bob asked Tina Terrell, FS Sequoia NF to address concerns when proposal is presented.

Ed Waldheim, California Off-Road Association, addressed the RRAC. He asked what follow up is planned for fee increases? What role will RRAC take? He also stated that when an agency asks for a fee increase the RRAC should ask agency to show costs.

RRAC replied they will be taking field trips and ask for updates on what has been accomplished.

He stated that he doesn't believe it is the RRAC's job to propose fees, let agency propose fees and RRAC makes recommendations. From a customer standpoint, he wants to have a better system in place, not just for raising fees but want to be sure we have improved areas also. If agency is proposing a fee increase, he feels that they are providing enough information. Fees haven't increased in years and numbers of people is great. He would like to see e-mail list for stakeholders group to send notices.

Linda McMillan responded to topic from last meeting. She displayed satellite imagery that shows changes to landscape over time. Passed out information on product and said it is public domain and anyone can get this.

Proposal	Proposal	RRAC
Name/Location		Recommendation
Imperial Sand Dunes	Increase Special	Motion made to
OHV Area BLM, EI	Recreation Permit fee	recommend fee increase
Centro Field Office	purchased on site from	as proposed made by
	\$25 to \$40 for weekly,	Nate Rangel, seconded
	\$90 to \$120 for season	by Dick Dasmann.
	pass. Special Recreation	Motion carried.
	Permit fee purchased off	
	site would not change.	

Discussion & Questions:

- Would take effect October 2008 and start selling in September.
- Explain traffic management if all ready have a pass, is there anyway to

add lane to let prepaid pass holders to pass through? Use Law Enforcement to direct traffic. No additional lane so RRAC suggested using cones or other methods to add a lane for prepaid pass holders was important.

- BLM anticipates this price difference to lower cost of collecting fees by encouraging visitors to buy pass off site.
- Is there a plan to improve communication and put staff in area to provide info? It costs \$3.5 million to manage ISD which is the majority of the funding is through a State OHV Grant so will have to look at balancing out.
- Looking at 10% growth, do you have plans in future to raise fees? Will need to update business plan to support in future, may look at in 2010.
- Public Comment Period: Ed Waldheim, California Off -Road Association complimented Neil Hamada, ISD Manager, on doing a good job or managing the program. Talked about backup at entrance occurs on to the State Hwy. He spoke in support of encouraging off-site purchases to help address this and sup

Proposal Name/Location	Proposal	RRAC Recommendation
		Recommendation
Eldorado NF, Day Use	l la company of the c	NA C
Carson Pass, Meiss,	Increase Standard	Motion made to
Pyramid Creek, Eagle	Amenity fee from \$3 to	recommend fee increase
Falls, Woods Lake	\$5.	as proposed made by
Trailheads		Nate Rangel, seconded
		by Monte Hendricks.
		Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

- Are these strictly vehicle fees? Fee is charged on a per vehicle basis.
- The America the Beautiful Pass is accepted at these sites.
- How are fees collected? Self service fee tubes are available at the sites.

Proposal Name/Location	Proposal	RRAC Recommendation
Sly Guard Station Cabin, Eldorado NF	Implement a new Expanded Amenity Fee \$65 per night.	Motion made to recommend new fee as proposed made by Paul McFarland, seconded by Nathan Rangel. Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

- Is this on the National Reservation System? Yes, it is required.
- What is the floor plan? It is one bedroom, living room, kitchen/dining area and accommodates 2 people. Future cabin proposals should show how many it sleeps.
- Do you limit the number of people. Yes, but they typically allow people to put up tents.
- Is this fee enough to cover propane expenses? The Forest feels that it is

- and appropriated funds are also used to cover expenses.
- Monte Hendricks related that it is on a county road so easy access for maintenance. He felt that it would be good to offer for rental, people who use take pride and kept it clean and appreciated the opportunity.
- There is currently a propane hot water heater, a suggestion was made to try tankless water heater to reduce costs.
- Is this usable in winter? Yes, available year around.
- When price is set is it to cover all expenses or are there other funding sources? A combination of funding is used; don't always look at fees for 100% of the operation and maintenance costs.

Proposal Name/Location	Proposal	RRAC Recommendation
Sequoia NF Recreation Rentals		
Big Meadow Cabin	Increase Expanded Amenity Fee from \$100 to \$125.	Motion made to recommend fee increase as proposed made by
Camp 4 ½ Cabin	Increase Expanded Amenity Fee from \$75 to \$100.	Nathan Rangel, seconded by Monte Hendricks.
Oak Flat Lookout	Increase Expanded Amenity Fee from \$35 to \$50.	Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

- No picture for Big Meadow but described it looked similar to other cabins and has a fire ring. Firewood is provided.
- What public involvement was done? Referred to Public Involvement summary which included notices at site, press release, open houses, Forest website and briefing local elected officials.

Proposed reviewing 3 cabins together.

Proposal	Proposal	RRAC
Name/Location		Recommendation
Mendocino NF Group		
Campgrounds		
Camp Discovery	Increase Expanded Amenity fee from \$150 to \$175 per night and \$75 to \$100 for day use.	Motion made to recommend fee increase as proposed made by Paul McFarland,
Gray Pine Group & Masterson Group	Increase Expanded Amenity fee from \$50 to \$75.	seconded by Charlie Wilson. Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

 No public comments received. Forest posted fee increase notice at the sites and mailed to previous users.

sites and mailed to previous users.		
Proposal	Proposal	RRAC

Name/Location		Recommendation
Mendocino NF Family		
Campgrounds		
Sycamore Grove	Increase Expanded Amenity fee from \$12 to \$16, add double site fee of \$30 and partial hookup site fee of \$25.	Motion made to recommend new fees and fee increase as proposed made by Nathan Rangel,
Eel River & Hammerhorn	Increase Expanded Amenity fee from \$6 to \$8.	seconded by Chris Oberti. Motion carried.
Plaskett & Mill Valley	Increase Expanded Amenity fee from \$8 to \$10.	
Main Letts, Saddle Camp, Spillway & Stirrup	Increase Expanded Amenity fee from \$10 to \$12.	
Middle Creek,	Increased Expanded Amenity fee from \$6/\$10 to \$8/\$12 and \$2 extra vehicle fee.	
Howard Lake, Little Doe, Deer Valley, Penny Pines	Implement new Expanded Amenity fee of \$6.	
North Fork, Dixie Glade, Little Stony, & Fouts	Implement new Expanded Amenity fee of \$5.	
South Fork, Davis Flat & Mill Creek	Implement new Expanded Amenity fee of \$5 per vehicle per night.	

Discussion & Questions:

- There are several private campgrounds in the Sycamore area that charge about \$30.
- Why is O&M considerably higher at Plaskett Campground? This is a
 facility that needs some upgrades and O&M costs are higher when
 facilities are older, i.e. older toilets need to be pumped more often and
 cost more to keep clean. The forest has received Title II RAC funding to
 complete improvements in this campground in 2008.
- \$8.00 fee is very cheap for a campground; consumer may accept a higher fee than the FS thinks, look at not having so many different levels of fees.
- \$5 per night will take a long time to chip away at operation and maintenance costs.
- Why are operation and maintenance costs so much higher at Fouts and Davis Flat? Fouts CG has very high garbage hauling fees, 30% more than other campgrounds and Davis Flat is a 10 acre open camping area so more expensive to operate and maintain.

 Ed Waldheim, California Off-Road Association, stated \$24 million will be allocated to the State Cooperative Grant program. Requested FS to encourage forests to apply for the grants.

Proposal	Proposal	RRAC
Name/Location		Recommendation
Mendocino NF	Confirm Expanded	Motion made to
Recreation Rental, Pine	Amenity fee of \$50.	recommend fee as
Mountain Lookout.		proposed made by
		Nathan Rangel,
		seconded by Monte
		Hendricks.
		Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

- Before REA this site was rented with a Granger-Thye special use permit and the fees went to the Treasury.
- Site was inadvertently left off of the official REA site listing when forest transitioned to REA in June 2005.

Proposal	Proposal	RRAC
Name/Location		Recommendation
Mendocino NF, Boat	Implement new	Motion made to
Launches, Sacramento	Expanded Amenity fee of	recommend new fees as
River and Lake Red Bluff	\$6 for boat launch, \$30	proposed made by Monte
	for annual pass.	Hendricks, seconded by
		Dick Dasmann.
		Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

- Received some public comment opposed to new fees.
- What type of boats use the launches? Mostly fishing boats and dragsters, does not include car top boat launching in this fee.
- The Sacramento River Boat Launch is available May 15 September 15 only, Lake Red Bluff Boat Launch is open all year.

Proposal	Proposal	RRAC
Name/Location		Recommendation
Sequoia NF, Forks of the	Increase Special	Motion made to
Kern private boater	Recreation Permit fee	recommend fee increase
permit	from \$2 to \$10 for non-	as proposed made by
	refundable permit	Nathan Rangel,
	application fee.	seconded by Chris Oberti
		Motion carried.

Discussion & Questions:

RRAC reviewed letter from Mr. Peter Wiechers and discussed issues. Mr. Wiechers letter states that he is opposed to the fee increase. He further wrote that public has been excluded from participation in the project, notification of those most affected was essentially non-existent and not in local Kern Valley papers, timing and format of open houses and confusion over the fee.

- RRAC asked Tina Terrell, FS Sequoia NF to address these issues. Fee is permit fee for pre-season drawing for limited number of permits for limited number of permits for the Forks run of the Kern River. This permit system enables boaters that travel from out of the area to ensure they will be able to launch. Public involvement included posting notice at sites inviting comments, press releases to local newspapers, article about fee increases and open houses in Kern Valley Sun, posted on Forest website, conducted 6 public open houses, met with local clubs and organizations and briefed local Congressional staff. Responses received include 2 letters to the editor and 4 letters to the FS from the same individual opposed to fees and REA in general, 3 letters addressed white water related fees; 2 in support, 1 felt excessive, 3 e-mails in support of fee increase to maintain facilities and over 130 people attended open houses with overall support of fees to operate and maintain sites.
- \$18 collected in 2007 from private boaters, and the forest is projecting to collect \$322 in 2008. It appears to be low number of boaters so is this permit needed? It is important for some boaters coming from out of the area to ensure they can launch on the day they have planned.
- How does Forest make sure person with reservation is able to get in? The permits are issued from one office.

General Discussion and Questions: How often are the FS websites updated? Most websites are updated regularly, remember to refresh when viewing. Examples of FS web pages were displayed. R5 Recreation Fee Accomplishment web page and accomplishment reports were discussed. The Adventure Pass website linked thru the San Bernardino web page was also displayed.

Members discussed options for taking comments from the public in attendance at RRAC meetings, outside of the scheduled public comment period on the agenda. Members agreed that bylaws will be amended to state that prior to asking the RRAC for a motion to vote on a proposal, the Chairperson may request additional comments from public in attendance at the meeting.

Motion made to approve November 5-6, 2008 meeting notes with minor formatting changes by Nate, seconded by Patricia.

Next meeting June 24-25th. Travel 23rd and 26th. Anticipate proposals from Shasta-Trinity NF, BLM doesn't have anything on the horizon.

Nate motioned to adjourn, Charlie seconded. Adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

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